



American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



AAP Headquarters

141 Northwest Point Blvd
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098
Phone: 847/434-4000
Fax: 847/434-8000
E-mail: kidsdocs@aap.org
www.aap.org

Reply to

Department of Federal Affairs
Homer Building, Suite 400 N
601 13th St NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202/347-8600
Fax: 202/393-6137
E-mail: kids1st@aap.org

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October 25, 2005

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
205 Cannon Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Eshoo:

On behalf of the 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists of the American Academy of Pediatrics who are dedicated to the health, safety, and wellbeing of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I would like to share our support for S. 1357/H.R. 3160, the Meat and Poultry Pathogen Reduction and Enforcement Act.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 76 million Americans experience at least one episode of foodborne illness each year. Children, especially infants, are at particularly high risk for many foodborne illnesses because of their immature immune and gastrointestinal systems. Children may be especially vulnerable to the virulent strains of *E. coli* and other microbes that can cause disabling or fatal cases of Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). In 2004, CDC's Foodnet identified 52 cases of HUS among children under the age of 15 in just the ten states surveyed; of those 52 cases, 36 were among children under the age of 5.

The Meat and Poultry Pathogen Reduction and Enforcement Act would make meaningful steps toward safeguarding our nation's food supply by requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to:

- Identify the pathogens that make significant contributions to the number of foodborne illnesses associated with meat and poultry;
- Establish and update performance standards on reduction of pathogens in meat and poultry;
- Review regularly the list of pathogens to identify new risks and to provide an accurate gauge of the effectiveness of performance standards; and
- Develop a closer working relationship with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regarding foodborne pathogens.

The bill would also bolster USDA's enforcement authority with regard to performance and sanitation standards. Finally, the bill provides explicit authority for USDA to enforce its *Salmonella* performance standard, which is currently the subject of a court challenge. The salmonella performance standard requires slaughter establishments to reduce the incidence of salmonella contamination of meat and poultry below national baseline prevalence. Industry is challenging USDA's authority to regulate relevant to sanitation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics commends you for your work to reduce the toll of foodborne illness among children. We stand ready to assist you as this bill moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Eileen H. Ouellette, M.D., J.D., FAAP

Eileen Ouellette, MD, JD, FAAP
President